

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION
COUNCILLOR MAUREEN BATESON

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: JAYNE IVORY
DATE: 3rd October 2019**

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN CARE & CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE INFORMATION

The number of cases open to Children's Social Care remains relatively high at 1,776, with the number of children subject to child protection plans at 255. The number of Children in our Care is 404, which is a historically high figure and points to increasing prevalence of unacceptable levels of risk to children and young people within families in local communities. In addition, over 770 children are being supported by Early Help services, which means that 6% of the 0 to 19 year old child population is being supported by the council's Children's Services or partner agencies. 37 children have been adopted since April 2018 and 14 children are currently placed in adoptive placements.

YOUTHFORIA

120 young people from across the 21 North West Youth Councils descended on Blackburn Town Hall for the annual Youthforia event on 9th September. The young people came together to work on improving the lives of their peers and focus on relevant social issues. This included workshops on promoting the national 'Make Your Mark' campaign and the 'Pioneers of Sustainable Hope' (POSH) scheme. POSH has three main outcomes – to develop a sense of citizenship for the natural world, to create programmes of sustainable living education, and to create local campaigns that impact on local policy and practice. During the North West Youth Forum, Amine Gherensi was chosen by her peers to represent the young people of Lancashire as a member of the 13-person Youthforia Steering Group.

YJS RECEIVES INVESTORS IN CHILDREN AWARD FOR NINTH YEAR RUNNING

The Youth Justice Service (YJS) has received its Investors in Children Award for the ninth year in a row, in recognition of the continued involvement and participation of young people in shaping the delivery of the service. The assessor was "pleased to see that the service continues to involve children and young people in dialogue and that their voice has made some significant changes to the way the service runs and works with them... when asked the group if they felt the service listens to their voice and makes changes as a result of them, they all said yes".

DRAGONS' DEN NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP SERVICE PROGRAMME

Young people from across Blackburn and Darwen faced the 'Dragons Den' in August 2019 as part of a month-long National Citizenship Service (NCS) programme. The challenge was to design a social action project to benefit the local community and each team pitched their projects to a panel of 'Dragons' that included members of the executive team at Blackburn Rovers Community Trust, local business people and a community worker from the Council. The NCS participants were commended for their outstanding knowledge and commitment to the local community and they have since brought their ideas to life, helping to raise over £2,400 for good causes such as Lancashire Mind, Derian House, Lancashire Victims Support Services, East Lancashire Hospice and Darwen charity 'Fight Like a Kid'.

TRAILBLAZER PROGRAMME – SUCCESSFUL BID

The Blackburn with Darwen Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has successfully bid for funding to create new Mental Health Support Teams in schools as part of NHS England's new Trailblazer programme. This will help pupils and staff create an environment of mental wellbeing in their schools. Pupils struggling with mental health will benefit from more joined up care and support across schools and specialist NHS services, in a national roll out of the £9.3 million training scheme. The Mental Health Support Teams will be working with Pupil Referral Units, Special Schools, Secondary Schools and Year 6 Primary pupils to help support their transition into secondary school. The service is due to commence in January 2020, however the Education Mental Health Practitioners are required to undertake a year's training and so the full service will be rolled out in January 2021. As part of the scheme, a four-week waiting time for access to specialist NHS children and young people's mental health services will also be trialled, building on the expansion of NHS services underway.

SEEDS SERVICE RE-LOCATION

In May 2019, the SEEDS service (Adolescent Support Unit) moved to its new building which has consequently increased its capacity to support young people and their families and/or carers. The name SEEDS was created by the young people themselves, based on what they felt the service offers them (Support, Experience, Enjoy, Develop, Succeed). There are currently 62 young people getting support from SEEDS, with a further 16 benefitting from regular short breaks. Over the next 6 months the number of young people receiving a service from SEEDS is set to rise to 75 with access to regular short breaks increasing in line with need.

The creation of an adolescent hub within the SEEDS is in its infancy but it is already being noted as a strength in supporting young people to ensure pathways to services are easily accessible and timely responses are received. As part of developing the adolescent hub in the coming months, relevant professionals will have the opportunity to hot desk and/or base themselves at the adolescent hub. This will promote relationship-building between young people and the professionals seeing them in an informal setting.

SUMMER LUNCHBOX PARTNERSHIP

The Children Centres network has worked in partnership with the Kingdom Outreach charity for the third year to provide healthy packed lunches for children over the summer holidays. The lunches were available from 29th July to 23rd August and this year's programme received increased support from volunteers who helped prepare the sandwiches and snacks from early in the morning at Wesley Hall. In total, 10,851 packed lunches were distributed through the Children Centres and positive feedback has been received from families, with one parent sharing that "the packed lunches were really good and convenient and the kids enjoyed the picnics everyday". Activities for children aged 0-10 were also delivered at the Children Centres to enable children and their families to collect their lunch and enjoy their time at the centre.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES 2019

During the summer holidays, children and young people in Blackburn with Darwen engaged in events organised by Blackburn Rovers Community Trust as part of the Strategic Youth Alliance offer, with over 3,700 attendances. The programme included youth clubs sessions, indoor and outdoor activities, trips and visits and engagement in the Premier League Kicks.

Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities enjoyed inclusion events delivered by Young People's Services which included a day trip to Blackpool Zoo, mountain biking, swimming and nature walks in Witton Park.

The summer concluded with a party at the Kaleidoscope Youth Club.

SEND INSPECTION OUTCOME

Ofsted and CQC conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Blackburn with Darwen to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The inspection letter outlined the inspectors' findings which included areas of strength and areas for further development. The inspection team recognised that considerable progress has been made in implementing the reforms and that the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities is a high priority. The close working relationships between professionals across education, care and health was described as a strength. Unlike other inspection reports, a SEND area inspection is not graded, however, local areas where findings present a significant concern receive a Written Statement. The letter cited that the local area demonstrated a clear capacity for improvement and a Written Statement was not given. In comparison, 67% of local areas in the North West have received a Written Statement following an inspection.

ST LUKE AND ST PHILIPS OFSTED OUTCOME

In July, St Luke and St Philips Primary School was judged 'good' by OFSTED in all areas and deemed to be 'thriving' by inspectors. Pupils fed back to inspectors on the improvements made since the previous inspection in 2017; "our school is so much better, we do a lot of interesting and exciting things in lessons". The feedback from inspectors also noted that pupils who are disadvantaged make strong progress, and parents shared with inspectors that their children are safe, happy and flourishing.